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FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE LESS DEVELOPED AREAS

SUMMARY

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Food and Agriculture Organization

THE PLACE OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CROPS IN FOOD PRODUCTION IN THE LESS DEVELOPED AREAS OF THE WORLD

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THE PLACE OF FRUIT AND VEGETABLE CROPS IN FOOD PRODUCTION IN THE LESS DEVELOPED AREAS OF THE WORLD

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The diets of the populations of many tropical countries are predominantly starchy in composition because they consist largely of cassava, yams, bananas, plantains, rice, etc. and are lacking in the proteins, vitamins and minerals necessary for normal growth, good health and working efficiency. This is characteristic of most low income nations in the world, above all in the highly populated regions.

The importance of fruits and vegetables in the diet does not lie in their contribution of carbohydrates or fats, but rather as rich sources of the vitamins, mineral salts and, in the case of legumes and nuts, the proteins that are so indispensable for human health. All methods should, therefore, be used to encourage expansion of their cultivation and consumption.

In many of the less developed countries, especially in Africa, monoculture and shifting cultivation are frequent practices. The introduction of vegetables into the cropping system of these countries would also be advantageous for soil conservation and the maintenance of soil fertility through introduction of legumes. These factors would help to develop a more stable economy and a higher standard of living.

Intensive cropping systems which introduce vegetable crops in the rotation would provide tropical countries with the possibility of higher returns and better production of food.

Special consideration is given to the main fruit species of importance to nutrition in the developing countries, such as mango, banana, citrus, guava, avocado, date palm, coconut, etc.

There is hope that programs of education and training in nutrition which are multiplying rapidly in the developing countries, will bring to the fore the important role of fruit and vegetables in the diet of the populations of tropical regions and will lead to improvement in the production and consumption of these horticultural crops.